

**What Is Claimed Is:**

1. A method of electronically closing a multi-party transaction comprising offers from a plurality of parties, the method comprising:
  - 5 receiving a multi-party offer encompassing a set of offers from a plurality of parties, wherein each of said offers, including said multi-party offer, identifies a first value to be provided for a second value;
  - determining whether any of said offers have expired;
  - determining whether any of said offers is invalid; and
  - 10 for one or more of said offers:
    - contacting an authority associated with said offer;
    - informing said authority of a transaction involving said offer; and
    - committing said authority to provide said first value.
- 15 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said determining whether any of said offers have expired comprises:
  - examining an expiration of each of said offers; and
  - determining whether any of said expirations have passed.
- 20 3. The method of claim 2, wherein said expirations are included in said offers.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said determining whether any of said offers is invalid comprises examining a validity indicator associated with
- 25 each of said offers.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein said examining comprises

querying said authority associated with each of said offers.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein said validity indicators are included in said offers.

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7. The method of claim 1, further comprising determining whether each of said offers is usable.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein said determining whether each of said offers is usable comprises accessing a usability indicator associated with each said offer, and wherein said usability indicator indicates a number of times said first value of said offer may be provided.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said accessing comprises querying said authority associated with each said offer.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein said usability indicators are included in said offers.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein for each said offer said authority is one of:

a party offering said first value for said second value; and  
an entity authorized to close said offer for said party.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein said committing said authority comprises:  
providing said authority with one or more terms according to which said

first value of said offer is to be provided; and

instructing said authority to transfer said first value of said offer to a recipient of said first value.

5           13.    The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
for each of said offers, initiating transfer of said first value.

10           14.    The method of claim 13, wherein said initiating comprises  
instructing said authority to transfer said first value.

15           15.    The method of claim 1, wherein said first value of said multi-party  
offer is payment for said second value of said multi-party offer, further comprising  
remitting a portion of said payment to an authority associated with an offer to  
provide said second value of said multi-party offer in exchange for said payment  
portion.

20           16.    A method of electronically closing a multi-party transaction  
comprising a plurality of offers from multiple parties, the method comprising:  
receiving a first offer of a first party to provide a first value in exchange  
for a second value, wherein said first offer is coupled to a second offer of a second  
party to provide said second value in exchange for a third value;  
contacting a first authority associated with said first offer;  
contacting a second authority associated with said second offer;  
initiating transfer of said second value from said second party to said first  
25 party; and  
initiating transfer of said first value from said first party.

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17. The method of claim 16, further comprising determining whether either of said first offer and said second offer have expired.

5 18. The method of claim 16, further comprising determining whether said first offer and said second offer are valid.

10 19. The method of claim 16, wherein said first value is a payment comprising said third value, the method further comprising:  
receiving said payment; and  
remitting said third value to said second party.

15 20. The method of claim 16, further comprising:  
receiving with said first offer an option concerning said second value; and  
communicating said option to said second authority.

21. The method of claim 16, further comprising verifying with said second authority that said second value can be provided.

20 22. The method of claim 16, wherein said first authority is further associated with one of said first value and said second value.

23. The method of claim 16, wherein said first authority created said first offer.

25 24. The method of claim 16, wherein said first authority is designated to handle closing of said first offer on behalf of a first party offering said first value in exchange for said second value.

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25. The method of claim 16, wherein said first authority is identified in said first offer.

5           26. A method of electronically closing a multi-party transaction comprising a collection of offers from a plurality of parties, the method comprising:

          receiving said offers, wherein each of said offers is an offer to exchange a first value in return for a second value;

10           initiating a multi-party transaction to close said offers;

          verifying said offers to ensure each said offer is transactable;

          authorizing said offers to inform authorities associated with said offers of the multi-party transaction;

          committing a first subset of said offers to initiate transfer of said first

15           values of said first subset of offers; and

          if any of said first values of said offers are monetary values, remitting a second subset of said offers comprising those offers having monetary values as said first values.

20           27. The method of claim 26, wherein said verifying a first offer comprises:

          determining whether said first offer is expired;

          determining whether said first offer is valid; and

          determining whether said first value of said first offer has already been

25           provided a maximum number of times.

28. The method of claim 26, wherein said authorizing a first offer

comprises:

contacting a first authority associated with said first offer; and  
receiving from said first authority an agreement to provide said first value  
of said first offer.

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29. The method of claim 26, wherein said committing a first offer to  
provide a good or service comprises:

contacting a first authority associated with said first offer;  
if said first offer includes an option for said good or service, providing said  
10 option to said first authority; and  
informing said first authority to deliver said good or service.

30. The method of claim 26, wherein said remitting a first offer having  
a monetary value as said first value comprises:

15 receiving said monetary value; and  
forwarding a portion of said monetary value to a party associated with a  
second offer having said portion as said second value of said second offer.

31. A computer readable storage medium storing instructions that,  
20 when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform a method of  
electronically closing a multi-party transaction comprising a plurality of offers  
from multiple parties, the method comprising:

receiving a first offer of a first party to provide a first value in exchange  
for a second value, wherein said first offer is coupled to a second offer of a second  
25 party to provide said second value in exchange for a third value;  
contacting a first authority associated with said first offer;  
contacting a second authority associated with said second offer;



36. The apparatus of claim 35, wherein said commitment module directs said second party to deliver said second value.

5 37. The apparatus of claim 32, wherein said first value comprises a monetary payment for said second value, and wherein said remittance module is configured to receive said monetary payment and forward said third value toward said second party.

10 38. The apparatus of claim 32, further comprising an offer parser configured to parse said first offer.

15 39. The apparatus of claim 38, wherein said first offer comprises said second offer and said offer parser is further configured to retrieve said second offer from said first offer.

20 40. The apparatus of claim 38, wherein said offer parser is also configured to retrieve from said first offer information to facilitate contact with said first party.

41. The apparatus of claim 40, wherein said information includes one of a network address and a resource identifier.

25 42. The apparatus of claim 38, wherein said offer parser is also configured to retrieve from said first offer a selectable option for said second value.



43. The apparatus of claim 42, wherein said selectable option is communicated to said second party by one or more of said authorization module, said commitment module and said remittance module.

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